Press release

Railtex is platform for rail weather experts

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Floods, storms and changeable weather conditions have already caused chaos for many rail operators in recent weeks - so it's timely that visitors to this year's Railtex can learn first-hand how they can keep one step ahead of the elements.

At this year's Railtex exhibition experts from the Met Office will be on hand to show operators how they can manage the effects of severe weather on the rail network with one of the most accurate weather forecasting services available.

The Met Office this year began working with Railtrack to provide daily forecasts for train operators and infrastructure companies. Features of the service include:

- Daily regional or route-specific hazard forecasts for railway operations
- Site-specific ice prediction for conductor rails, overhead lines or station platforms and car parks
- National archive of past weather data
- Forecast delivery by fax, e-mail, the internet or even direct to a mobile phone

As part of the contract, the Met Office supplies weather services to Railtrack's nine control centres across Britain - including local area forecasts and warnings for a range of weather events that have the potential to disrupt rail services.

There are also specialist services for complex issues such as autumnal leaf fall and the formation of ice on conductor rails. According to Nick Layt, Rail Account Manager at the Met Office, the Railtrack work is a milestone for UK rail weather forecasting:

"We are very excited to have the opportunity to work closely with Railtrack to develop services that can really make a difference to railway operations. Winning this contract has been just the start - from next year we expect to be developing more services that are increasingly focused on areas where there are likely to be potential problems caused by the weather.

"With the Railtrack contract adding to existing services for companies such as London Underground, Scotrail, GTRM, and the Manchester Metrolink, we are creating a core team of national rail forecasting specialists who will act as a focus for all weather-forecasting activities in this area."

Using accurate weather forecasts enables Railtrack to make more-informed decisions and provide a reliable response in the event of bad weather.

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